

TRUE TO HEART

GENUINE AND HUMBLE TO A FAULT, FRED CAMPBELL'S LATEST BOOK IS LESS ABOUT HIMSELF AND MORE ABOUT THE PLACES HE'S BEEN AND THE PEOPLE HE'S MET.

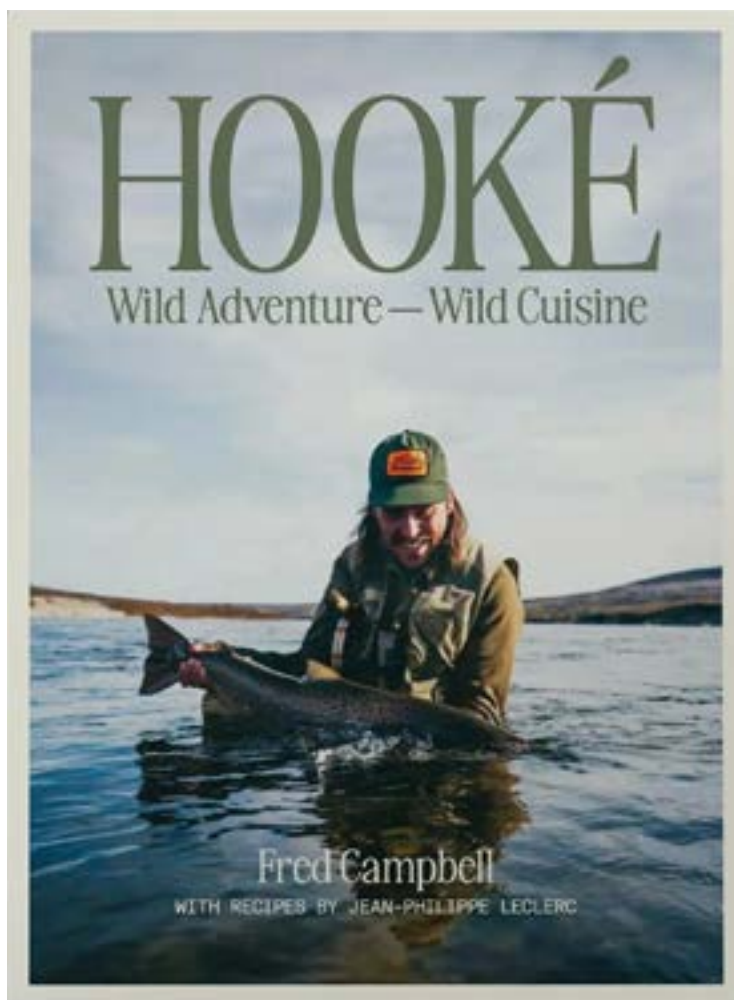
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Twelve years ago, at the ungodly hour of 2:30 am, fuelled by the high-octane liquid wake-me-up Charles Cusson calls coffee, I met Fred Campbell, the founder of Hooké, for the first time. No, it wasn't the end of a long day in a pub in Quebec City, although that did happen as well, but much later. The first time I met him was at the start of a day-long interview with him, and to be honest, I couldn't keep up (Kings of Cool, ASJ, Autumn 2014). When the day ended roughly 12 hours later, I was done, but Fred was still going strong, working the DJ booth at a wild party following the screening of his first full-length film, *Patagonia - Fly Fishing Vibes*.

Replace those 12 hours with years and you pretty much have the story of Fred's career as an entrepreneur and outdoor enthusiast. He has been on the go for more than a decade. In just a couple of weeks this spring, he was all over the world. He flew to Argentina to film in the Patagonia region, where he was fly-fishing via horseback. He also attended numerous screenings of *Scale of Change*, the conservation-driven travelling film tour dedicated to protecting wild fish and the rivers they call home. Immediately after a screening at the Majestic Theatre in St. John's, Newfoundland, Fred headed off to Hokkaido, Japan for the launch of a Hooké partnership.







The original French edition "Hooké: Aventures et Cuisine Sauvage," won a Gold Taste Canada Award for best culinary adventure book.

A few weeks earlier, I had bumped into him at a showing of the PALM film festival in Montreal. I greeted him with, "Here is the hardest-working man in Atlantic salmon conservation." I wasn't kidding. From my privileged perch, I've watched Fred over the past 12 years as he's immersed himself in the fly-fishing world, promoting Atlantic salmon conservation at every opportunity.

And now, over 10 years since the Journal published "Kings of Cool," there is no sign Fred is slowing down. He is fresh off the publication of *Hooké, Wild Adventure—Wild Cuisine*, another huge project. In it we learn a lot about Fred's backstory. One question he answers early in the book is this: With all the travel, sports shows, meetings and *Hooké* financial matters, does he consider himself overworked? The short answer: no. "The publication of this book is the culmination of the past 10 years of trips and learning, during which I felt like I didn't work a single day," he writes in the introduction.

The book seems to be organized like a *Hooké* road trip, full of surprises, great images in stunning wild

HOOKÉ: Wild Adventure—Wild Cuisine
By Fred Campbell, with recipes
by Jean-Philippe Leclerc

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landscapes, and fascinating personalities. In Chapter 1 he describes his first journey north. He had been invited to Leaf River Lodge to film a fishing and hunting expedition. At the time, he had been producing videos with his company, Fokus, and had built a solid reputation for his work.

It was his first time in a float plane, and the experience had a lasting impact. "The floatplane landed on the water, and my eye went to the white cabins along the shore of the Leaf River. I was instantly aware of my luck. I didn't have the money for this kind of trip. My camera was my passport: my passion was my luggage. And I was setting foot on this new unknown land."

In a later chapter, "Land of Birth," the *Hooké* team visits the Gaspé Peninsula. There he has another epiphany: "As we step into the river, a light mist lifts and the birds begin to sing. We can hear our footsteps on the rocks, the sound of our fishing lines in the air. It is a meditation."

But like Fred's life, reading the book is not as simple as travelling through chapters 1 through 11. Along the way there are side trips and meetings with local personalities. There are times when the book transports you to the back seat of Fred's grandfather's tone-on-tone brown and beige Econoline van. In the front, the driver and passenger are talking about past experiences and future dreams. You're in "the vault," a place and time where people reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings.

Fred's line of work keeps him in public view on all the social media outlets. Yet the more you view his content online, the more you wonder, "Who is Fred Campbell?" Fortunately, much is revealed in the vault. His Grandpa Benoit owned the Econoline van, which he later sold to Fred. "Grandpa Benoit and his son were my first mentors," he tells us. "From maple syrup-making to mechanics, from farm to forest, from hunting to fishing, they could do anything—you could see it etched in the skin on their hands."

We learn a lot about Fred's public persona from his films and reels. The book, however, takes us to times and places that the Facebook reels and Instagram stories cannot. We learn of the time when his parents separated and money was scarce; when

news arrived of his dad's death in a car collision with a moose; and when his own accident ended his skateboarding and athletic career while he was still a teenager.

Despite the book being by Fred, co-author Jean-Philippe Leclerc provides the recipes and wilderness cooking techniques. The two authors often choose to remain in the background and pass the pen to Hooké's collaborators. Fred's friend, Marc Séguin, writes in the preface, "The book tells a story. His story." That's true, but in doing so, it also tells of Marc's involvement. There are many other supporting characters. Marc Leblanc, a Gaspé guide and fly-tyer, offers a short essay. He speaks for all guides when he writes, "It's not an easy occupation. It's rewarding but also very demanding." Another contribution is from Juliette Larocque. The talented photographer begins with the most unexpected revelation: "I had never fished or hunted before arriving at Hooké." From having virtually no experience angling to experiencing "the surge of adrenaline you get when you catch a big fish," her voyage of discovery mirrors that of all who have immersed themselves in the outdoors.

It is this inherent belief in sharing the spotlight and allowing his partners to speak freely in the pages of the book that explains, in part, how Fred has been able to forge so many valued partnerships. His

collaboration with ASF is only one example; he has also formed strong relationships with Indigenous groups; commercial interests, like Yeti and Loop Tackle; and lodges and outfitters that have shared the Hooké experience.

And so that metaphorical old brown Econoline keeps rolling, to La Vérendrye, James Bay, British Columbia, Anticosti and New Brunswick. Talk continues in the front seat and we listen intently. We read about Fred's powerful connection to Lee Wulff. Fred writes, "His life as a storyteller, explorer and conservationist resonates strongly with my own path." And he reveals another idol of his, Yvon Chouinard, whom he uses as a model for his outdoor clothing line and his mission—to respect nature and give back to it at every opportunity.

Of course, not all can be revealed in a long road trip or in an entertaining and informative book. Some mysteries remain, which is good, because they leave more to discover. The book, like all good ones, answers many questions but leaves some unanswered. For me, I appreciated Fred revealing that he owes much to his DNA. "I can draw a clear line from my family to who I am today," he says in the introduction. It's easy to see that line throughout the book, in his love of fishing and hunting, his appreciation for new faces and talent.

Fred Campbell and Peter Treichel on the Traful River in Argentina during filming for a new episode of the LOOP Youtube series, Wild Fish / Wild Places.





(RIGHT)

Fred takes time to fly-fish during his recent trip to Hokkaido, Japan, where he launched outdoor clothing brand Hooké onto the Japanese market.

(ABOVE)

Pike tacos, one of many scrumptious recipes by Jean-Philippe Leclerc.

Yet what about his flair for designing and marketing clothing? In my family, making and selling clothes goes back generations; we refer to it jokingly as the “schmatta,” or rag, trade. But the clothing business is no joke. It is a tough, at times cut-throat, affair. And Fred deserves respect for how he has made Hooké a household name in a very short period.

Genetics can only explain so much. So then what about Fred’s success with his outdoor clothing line? If we look back 12 years at that first meeting of mine with Fred and friends on the Bonaventure, we find a clue. Out on Salmon Pool, his crew was learning about fishing and filming for Atlantic salmon “on the go.” The temperature was going to heat up, but at 3 a.m. it was still cool, so the priority, even before the first cast, was to start a fire on the bank.

As the flames grew and the wood crackled into coals, there was much technical talk but also plenty of laughs. A long day of filming and a late night of movies, music and dancing lay ahead, but there was very little sense that anyone was there to work. The fun and friendships were genuine and give truth to Fred’s claim of feeling like he’s not “worked a day.” More than a decade later, in his films, collaborations and clothing lines, the “curious little boy” in the back of the brown Econoline is very much the heart and soul of Hooké. But now he is the one in the front seat, sharing the joy, eagerness and anticipation of the great outdoors as the van moves through a night-cloaked forest, under a star-filled sky, toward the next wild river. 🌊

Hooké, Wild Adventure—Wild Cuisine can be ordered at hooke.com

